

# Green Country Veteran

A JACK C. MONTGOMERY VA MEDICAL CENTER MAGAZINE

ISSUE 03 | SUMMER 2013

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**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century





On the cover: Army Veteran Saul Bosquez, a third baseman for the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team, throws to first base during the American Heroes Classic which was held May 5 in Muskogee. Read more about the Wounded Warriors' visit on pg. 4.

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# Green Country Veteran

**Director** James Floyd, MHA, FACHE

**Acting Associate Director** Inez Reitz, MSM

**Chief of Staff** Thomas Schenider, D.O., FACOI

**Associate Director for Patient Care Services** Bonnie Pierce, MSN, RN, CENP

**Managing Editor** Nita McClellan

**Editor, Writer & Photographer** Nathan Schaeffer

**Visual Information Specialist** Christopher Beshears

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*Please contact Nita McClellan at [benita.mcclellan@va.gov](mailto:benita.mcclellan@va.gov) or call 918-577-3704 or Nathan Schaeffer at [nathan.schaeffer@va.gov](mailto:nathan.schaeffer@va.gov) if you have comments, suggestions, ideas or questions. Your feedback is always appreciated. All submissions are subject to editing and will not be returned to sender.*



Jack C. Montgomery  
VETERANS AFFAIRS  
MEDICAL CENTER

"Excellence Starts Here"

1011 Honor Heights Dr  
Muskogee, Oklahoma 74401  
Phone: 918-577-3000  
Toll Free: 1-888-397-8387  
[www.muskogee.va.gov](http://www.muskogee.va.gov)





# New Extended Clinic Hours

By the JCMVAMC Public Affairs Office

On July 18, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) began offering extended hours for Primary Care and Behavioral Medicine clinics in Muskogee and Tulsa on Thursdays and Saturdays to provide more convenience for Veterans.

"The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center is committed to increasing health care access for our Veterans," said Dr. Thomas Schneider, JCMVAMC Chief of Staff. "The new extended hours will help us in that goal by offering more convenient clinic hours for those who are unable to make appointments during our normal business hours."

## LOCATIONS & EXTENDED HOURS

### Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center

1011 Honor Heights Dr., Muskogee

Primary Care and Behavioral Medicine clinics will offer extended hours on Thursdays until 6:30 p.m. and will be open on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

### Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic

9322 E. 41st St., Tulsa

Primary Care will offer extended hours on Thursdays until 6:30 p.m. and will be open on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Behavioral Medicine will be open on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the 41st St. clinic location.

### Tulsa Behavioral Medicine Service Clinic

10159 E. 11th St., Suite 100, Tulsa

Behavioral Medicine will offer extended hours on Thursdays until 6:30 p.m.



*Come in* We're  
**OPEN  
LATE**

*Normal business hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. During the extended hours, Lab, Radiology and Pharmacy will also be available at the Muskogee hospital and Tulsa outpatient clinic.*

**Veterans interested in having appointments made during the extended hours should contact their teams/clinics.**

For more information on VA health care, visit [www.muskogee.va.gov](http://www.muskogee.va.gov).

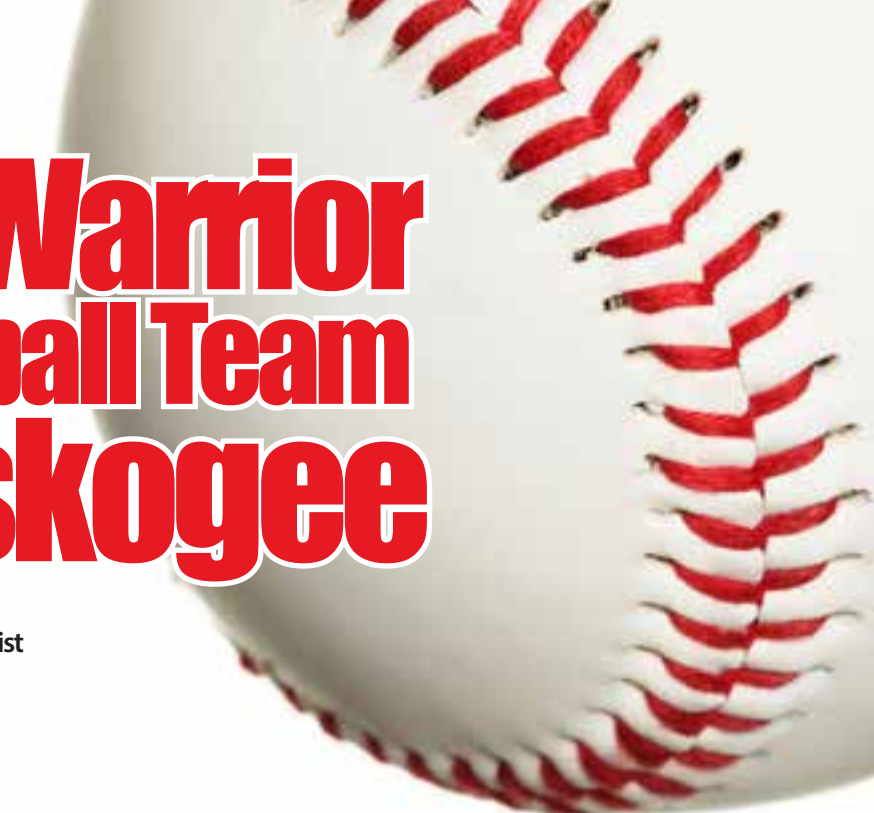




*Marine Veteran Josh Wege bats during the American Heroes Classic, which was held May 5 in Muskogee.*







# Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team Visits Muskogee

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Photos by Christopher Beshears, Visual Information Specialist

In March 2012, the Muskogee VA Regional Office invited members of the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team (WWAST) to visit Muskogee to speak to VA employees about their combat experience and the obstacles they face as amputees.

The WWAST was founded in April 2011 and the team travels around the nation on a mission to raise awareness, through exhibition and celebrity softball games, of the sacrifices and resilience of the military, and highlight their ability to rise above any challenge.

The team includes Veterans with a variety of amputations of the arm, above knee, below knee, bilateral below knee and foot. Most of the players were wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, while one player was wounded in Desert Storm.

After visiting the VA Regional Office, WWAST Coach David Van Sleet, Marine Veteran Josh Wege and Army Veteran Matt Kinsey visited inpatients at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC). During the visit, VA staff and the team made plans to

play a future exhibition game in Muskogee.

The team returned in May this year to play in the American Heroes Classic, which was the 53rd city the team has visited in more than two years. On May 4, the team was scheduled to play a double header against VA staff from JCMVAMC and the VA Regional Office followed by a game against the Muskogee Fire and Police Departments.

However, rain forced event organizers to cancel the Saturday double header and reschedule it for Sunday morning at 7:30 a.m., so players could catch flights later that day.

“The weather wasn’t on our side ever since we got here, but everyone wanted to play so bad,” said Van Sleet. “The Muskogee Parks and Recreation Department and the VA put a big effort into making this happen on an early Sunday morning before our flights. It was a team effort.”

Despite the early morning, more than 100 people attended the game.

“We were kind of bummed thinking we’re not going to get to play at all,” said Marine Veteran William ‘Spanky’ Gibson, a WWAST member. “To be able to pull a game out at 7:30 in the morning and to have probably a hundred people show up to watch us was amazing.”

The game was never in doubt and the Wounded Warriors soundly defeated the VA staff 16-5. Despite the loss, players from the VA Softball Team were honored to participate in the game.

“If you have to lose, I couldn’t ask to lose to a better group of guys,” said Jerome Fouche, the former Administrative Officer for JCMVAMC’s Patient Care Service. “These guys gave of themselves in conflict for our country and to be out here participating in a sporting event like this is great. It’s an awesome opportunity.”

Janet Potter, a Social Worker with JCMVAMC’s Polytrauma Support Clinic Team who often works with Veterans who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, also said it was an honor to play in the game.

“What a special event,” said Potter, who serves Veterans who have experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury. “When I first saw the flyer, I thought it would be great to be able to play softball with these Veterans. It was an honor to meet and play ball with Veterans who have successfully reintegrated into civilian life despite their injuries.”

## Oklahoma Veteran Strives to Inspire Others

**O**n May 16, 2006, retired Marine Master Sgt. William “Spanky” Gibson was leading a squad of Marines in Ramadi, Iraq on a house-to-house search for insurgents when a sniper’s bullet ripped through his left knee. The bullet completely shattered his knee and doctors were forced to amputate his left leg to save his life.

Despite losing a leg, Gibson stayed positive and set the ambitious goal of returning to Iraq. After several



*Marine Veteran William “Spanky” Gibson*

surgeries and rigorous rehabilitation, Gibson deployed to Iraq in February 2008 and made history by becoming the first above-the-knee amputee to return to combat.

Today, Gibson lives in his hometown of Pryor, Okla. and travels around the

country as an Executive Consultant for Tandus Flooring, a company based in Dalton, Ga. He is also a Veteran to Veteran Mentor for the Semper Fi Fund, a nonprofit set up to provide immediate financial support for injured and critically ill members of the military and their families.



*Army Veteran Matt Kinsey rounds third base during the American Heroes Classic.*



*Marine Veteran Tim Horton bats during the American Heroes Classic.*



In his spare time, he also plays on the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team. On May 5, Gibson took the field in Muskogee with his fellow Wounded Warriors.

Gibson, who receives his primary care through the JCMVAMC Yellow Team in Muskogee, said he was excited about the opportunity to play in Muskogee.

“Obviously, it’s close to my heart to play close to home,” said Gibson, who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1989 and also served in Desert Storm and Somalia. “But every place we play is awesome. Because every place we play, someone new gets to see what we can do.”

Gibson tried out for the team in 2010 and was later chosen as the Team Captain. During his first year with the team, he played approximately 30 games per year.

“It’s fun,” said Gibson. “Anytime you’re with a group of all amputees and you’re playing a sport or doing an event, it’s a lot of fun.”

He no longer plays with the team full-time, but he does play a few games a year.

Despite being a former Team Captain, Gibson is humble about his playing ability.

“I consider myself to be a mediocre to average player,” said Gibson, who typically plays catcher. “I’m not a home run hitter. It’s hard to hit home runs as an amputee.”

When he is behind the plate as a catcher, he said he enjoys giving opposing hitters a hard time when they come to the plate.

**“We want to prove to a lot of people around the country that we’re not necessarily disabled, we just have a limitation.”**

“My best attribute is being behind home plate and really getting to people through sarcasm and interesting conversation,” he said. “I do some trash talking and mess with them when they come to bat.”

While the game is intended to be a fun time for all involved, Gibson said the game is far more important than a typical sporting event. It’s a chance for the Wounded Warriors to demonstrate that they can lead normal lives, even with the loss of a limb.

“People are going to be surprised what Wounded Warriors can accomplish,” he said. “That’s the best part about it. We want to prove to a lot of people around the country that we’re not necessarily disabled, we just have a limitation. For the most part, everything else in our lives is good.”

Gibson also said he hopes the team is an inspiration to non-Veterans who are living with an amputation.

“We can step in and influence kids who are amputees or even other people who are going through recovery from an amputation,” said Gibson. “To me, that’s my part of it. I truly enjoy the fun of the game and the sport and getting out and meeting new people. But I also enjoy spreading the word about the importance of getting back to a normal lifestyle.” ★



The American Heroes Classic was made possible thanks to the generous support of the following individuals and organizations: Advanced Work Zone Services, AMBUCS, Inc., American Legion Auxiliary, Balfour Beatty Construction, Committee to Elect McPeak, Dan Myers, Eddie Warrior Correctional Center, Frontier International Trucks, Greater Muskogee Area Chamber of Commerce, Grissoms, LLC, Health Care Solutions, Jim & Melinda Murphy, M. Ross Inc., Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, Senator Earl Garrison, Service League of Muskogee & Vietnam Veterans of America.



For more information on the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team, visit their website at: [www.woundedwarrioramputeesoftballteam.org](http://www.woundedwarrioramputeesoftballteam.org)



# Honoring Oklahoma's Former Prisoners of War

Story and Photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist



*JCMVAMC Director James Floyd presents a medical center coin to Korean War Veteran and former Prisoner of War Roosevelt Powell.*



**O**n April 13, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center held its annual Former Prisoner of War (POW) Recognition Ceremony to honor and remember Oklahoma's former POWs.

The ceremony, which was attended by eight former POWs, was held at the American Legion Post 15 and included a free luncheon for the former POWs and their family members. During the ceremony, VAMC Director James Floyd and Muskogee VA Regional Office Director Jason McClellan addressed the former POWs and thanked them for their service to the nation.

"Freedom is not free," said Floyd. "We're here today to pay tribute to you and express our deep gratitude for the trials and tribulations you have been through. I hope that you feel respect from us today and the honor we want to give to you. It really comes from the heart."

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Joe Newhouse, a field representative for Rep. Jim Bridenstine, was the guest speaker for the ceremony. Assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, then Lt. Newhouse flew multiple missions during the Iraq War providing aerial coverage to Marine convoys over Fallujah and Baghdad.

As part of his pilot training, Newhouse said he received two days of POW training.

"I had two days worth of it in a POW camp where they try to replicate what it's like to be a POW," said Newhouse. "In my 10 years of active service, those were by far the hardest two days of my life. So the fact that several of you went years as a POW, is just unbelievable. Thank you for your excellent service in the cold, the heat, the isolation and just the dire conditions. We can't fathom what that was like."

## Oklahoma Veteran Recalls Time in Japanese Labor Camp

**A**mong the eight former POW's who attended the recognition ceremony was World War II Veteran Jack Warner, who drove from his home in Hammond, Okla. to attend the event.

In 1939, the Oklahoma native enlisted in the U.S. Marine



*Smoke rises from the Island of Corregidor during World War II. Marine Veteran Jack Warner, an Oklahoma native, became a prisoner of war in May 1942 when the U.S. surrendered the island to the Japanese.*

Corps. After combat training in California, Warner was shipped off to Shanghai, China where he served at the International Settlement for 14 months with the 4th Marine Regiment.

In 1941, Warner and the 4th Marine Regiment were dispatched to the Philippines to defend the island of Corregidor from a potential Japanese invasion. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese also bombed Corregidor.

"We didn't know war had been declared and the Japanese Zeros came in," said Warner. "They sank every (boat) the Navy had and then they started to hit the mainland and all the officers were yelling don't fire, don't fire. The pilots were flying so low you could see the profile of their faces when they hit us. We didn't have anything big enough to bring them down. So we just put so many holes in them they couldn't stay up and we shot them down. We just gave them everything we had."

On Dec. 29, 1941, the Japanese began bombing Corregidor on a daily basis in preparation for an invasion.

"Every day, you could almost set your watch between two and three," said Warner. "There were three waves of 29 bombers that came from Manilla and they would bomb us."

Warner said the U.S. military had several World War I era anti-aircraft guns to defend the island, but they were ineffective against the Japanese planes.

"(The Japanese) could fly at 27,000 feet and not be hindered by the anti-aircraft," said Warner.

Shortly before midnight on May 5, 1942, the Japanese began

*During World War II, Oklahoma native Jack Warner was a prisoner of war in Japan for almost three years.*



their assault of Corregidor and the first wave of Japanese troops began coming ashore.

“The Army had one search light left on Melinda Hill,” said Warner. “It came on for about three minutes, maybe that long, and that showed these landing boats coming in.”

Warner’s battalion was assigned to defend the beach and he had helped place electric mines along the beach. When the enemy troops came ashore, he helped detonate the mines.

“We had a button we could punch for the mines to blow,” said Warner. “We used every third one the first (wave), and every other one the second, and then we fired everything we had.”

The U.S. military inflicted about 900 casualties on the Japanese, but also suffered around 800 casualties as well.

Almost out of ammunition, the U.S. surrendered the island to the Japanese on May 6.

## **Warner Becomes a Prisoner of War**

**W**arner said he was forced to strip naked while Japanese doctors examined the surviving American troops. The Japanese selected 300 Americans, including Warner, to be sent to Japan to work as slave labor.

“They hand picked us and they told us we’d be the first group to go to Japan,” he said. “They took 75 Marines, 75 Navy and 150 Army. We had to strip off in our birthday suit and they had about 12 Japanese examine you. But they picked out the best physically fit ones.”

Before they arrived in Japan, the POWs were sent to Taiwan where they were forced to learn Japanese.

“They’d write Japanese on one side and translate it into English on the



other side,” said Warner. “A lot of (the POWs) learned a lot more than I did. I thought there’s no use learning something you’re not going to use.”

From Taiwan, the POWs were shipped to a POW labor camp in Yokohama. Warner said 26 Americans died during the journey from malnourishment and disease.

On Thanksgiving Day 1942, Warner began working as a riveter in a Japanese shipyard where he was forced to build tankers for the Japanese fleet.

At the beginning of each day, the POWs were forced to line up and count off in Japanese. If they didn’t say their number correctly in Japanese, Warner said the Japanese prison guards would beat them.

“You sure wanted to learn their language because you had to count off,” he said. “If you couldn’t remember your number in Japanese, they’d work you over pretty good with a club or rifle or whatever they had.”

Warner said he boxed in the camp with other POWs, which helped him sustain the beatings from the Japanese.

“I could roll with the punches when they worked me over pretty good,” he said.

One day, Warner volunteered to take a beating for a Navy sailor who he said was in bad shape.

“I don’t know what he had done, but he was a good kid and I knew him,” said Warner. “We knew he couldn’t take it if they give him a real beating.”

Warner said the POWs were only given a small amount of food to eat each day, which usually consisted of rice and fish heads.

Warner said he was also forced to repair German ships which docked outside the Yokohama harbor. However, he said the Germans fed him better than the Japanese.

“When we went out and riveted on a German ship, we always liked that because they carried hogs on their ships and they fed us two meals,” said Warner. “We got our ration plus what they gave us and we usually carried ours back to give to our buddies.”

While working in the shipyards, Warner said he and the other POWs helped sabotage the Japanese ships they built.

“We found out that all we had to do was get rid of the bolt, the washer or the nut,” said Warner. “If we hadn’t taken care of it through sabotage, the (American) submarines got it before it went out of the bay.”

When the U.S. began winning the war in the Pacific, the Japanese were very clear about what they’d do to the POWs if the U.S. invaded Japan.

“They already told us if there was an invasion, they were going to kill us,” said Warner. “They didn’t want no witnesses.”

However, when asked if he was ever afraid during his time as a POW, Warner quickly and without hesitation, said no.

“No, we didn’t have any of that,” he said.

In May 1945, American bombers destroyed the Yokohama shipyard. Warner said he had never seen an American B-29 bomber before, but he said he was happy to see them.

“When the B-29’s were flying, (the Japanese) had the fear of God put in them long before they dropped the atomic bomb.”

With the shipyard destroyed, the Japanese moved Warner and the other POWs up north to a steel mill where he was forced to build tunnels for an underground tunnel. He also was forced to clear land so the Japanese could plant gardens.

When the Japanese finally surrendered in Aug. 1945, Warner finally became a free man and returned to the U.S. five years after departing San Francisco on a U.S. Navy ship for China.

Looking back on his time as a POW, Warner said his will to survive was fueled by his desire to tell the world what the POWs endured at the Yokohama labor camp. Warner said the Japanese officer in charge of the camp was later convicted of war crimes and hung.

“I always figured I’d come back,” said Warner. “I said I was going to live through it all, because somebody had to tell the story.”

Warner said it is an honor to be a POW.

“I wouldn’t say it was a privilege, but I’d say it was an honor to be able to live through it and come back and talk about it,” he said. “A lot of (POWs) wouldn’t talk about it at all and still don’t.” ★

## Are you a POW?

If you’re a former POW and not enrolled for VA health care, please contact Nanette Waller, former POW Advocate, at 918-577-4150 or Pagette Hill, former POW Advocate, at 918-628-2601.



# Vietnam Veteran Awarded Purple Heart 46 Years Later

Story and Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

In December 1966, Navy Veteran Paul Phillips was serving in Vietnam with his fellow Navy Seabees when a bombed ripped through a USO building they were remodeling at a U.S. base.

Phillips suffered burns on nearly a third of his body and spent a year and a half recovering in a naval hospital.

Despite his injuries, Phillips was never awarded the Purple Heart from the U.S. Navy.

In late 2012, Phillips contacted VA staff at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) to learn how he could apply to receive the medal. VA staff encouraged him to contact Congressman Markwayne Mullin's office so a Congressional request could be submitted to the Department of Navy on his behalf.

On April 19, Rep. Mullin presented Phillips with the Purple Heart during a special ceremony at Go Ye Village in Tahlequah, which was attended by several hundred people.

"I thought it was awesome," said Phillips, who served four tours of duty in Vietnam. "I was hoping they would just send it to me in the mail. I didn't want to do all of this."

During the ceremony, Mullin said he was humbled to present the medal to Phillips.



*On April 19, Congressman Markwayne Mullin presented Vietnam Veteran Paul Phillips with the Purple Heart during a special ceremony at Go Ye Village in Tahlequah.*



"It's an absolute privilege today to recognize a gentleman that has probably waited long enough without being recognized for his service that he provided this great nation," said Mullin.

Mullin said presenting the medal was a greater honor to him than speaking on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"When I signed up for the job, I never thought this would be part of it," said Mullin. "I can tell you I've probably given a couple hundred interviews and speeches and I've yet to be this nervous. I'm not even worthy to present this medal. But I have been asked to do so and so I will do my best."

Phillips, who served 20 years in the Navy and retired as a Chief Petty Officer, also received an American flag that was flown in his honor on April 19 over the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Phillips said he was humbled by such an honor and said he only asked for the medal because of a request from his wife.

"I did it for my grandson," said Phillips, who lives in Tahlequah. "My wife has been wanting me to make a shadow box for my grandson and I never had the purple heart presented to me. So she got me moving on it and the Congressman came through."

Phillips, who receives his primary care from the JCMVAMC Blue Team, also added that he is very appreciative of the care he receives through VA.

"I like VA," said Phillips. "When I got out in 1982, I went to the VA in 1985 after I retired and I didn't go back for 15 years. But now, if I have anything wrong, I go to the VA. It's really changed. If I need anything, the doctors help me enormously." ★

## The Purple Heart

The Purple Heart is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those who have been wounded or killed while serving in combat on or after April 5, 1917 with the U.S. military.

## Notable Recipients

- James Garner, actor
- John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States
- John Kerry, Massachusetts Senator and United States Secretary of State
- John McCain, Arizona Senator
- Colin Powell, General, former United States Secretary of State
- Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., US Army General
- Eric Shinseki, General, current United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs
- Warren Spahn, baseball player
- Oliver Stone, director
- Chuck Yeager, Brigadier General, pilot who first broke the sound barrier.



## Most Purple Hearts

The most Purple Hearts awarded to a single individual is nine. Former Marine Sgt. Albert L. Ireland holds that distinction, being awarded five Purple Heart Medals in World War II and four more in the Korean War.

# JCMVAMC Celebrates 90th Anniversary

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist | Photos by Christopher Beshears, Visual Information Specialist



On June 14, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) celebrated its 90th Anniversary with a ceremony on the lawn of the Five Civilized Tribes Museum.

The ceremony included musical performances from the Cherokee Youth Choir which sang the National Anthem both in English and Cherokee and “God Bless America” in Cherokee. The Tulsa Symphony Orchestra’s Brass Ensemble also provided a musical prelude while Muskogee High School student Kerrigan Bradley and the VA Gospel Choir performed the patriotic song “Color Me America.”

Also in attendance were Oklahoma National Guard soldiers from the Governor’s Honor Guard who performed the important job of posting and retiring the colors.

In total, more than 350 VA employees and local residents braved the humid June heat to attend the celebration including Ben Robinson, former Oklahoma Senator,

David Jones, Muskogee Deputy Mayor, Rita Aragon, Secretary of the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, Jason Self, a caseworker for U.S. Representative Markwayne Mullin and Rica Lewis-Payton, director of the Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) 16.

During the ceremony, JCMVAMC Director James Floyd provided an overview of the hospital’s history and noted recent improvements the medical center has made to improve the quality of care Veterans receive.

“As we close the door on 90 years and look to begin our 91st year, I believe our future is bright and we must continue pushing forward to improve the care we give to our nation’s heroes,” said Floyd. “I thank you for joining us today to help us celebrate this milestone in our history.”

Lewis-Payton, who oversees the medical center along with nine other VA hospitals in VISN 16, was the guest speaker for the celebration. Lewis-Payton provided an update on national VA initiatives such as the effort to reduce Veteran homelessness and the Mental Health Hiring Initiative, which has increased the number of VA mental health workers by more than 1,600 nationwide.



*In this photo taken Dec. 22, 1936, workers prepare to pour the concrete for Building 22, a new recreation building that included an auditorium, library, canteen, lunch rooms, post office and office space.*



Lewis-Payton also thanked both Veterans for their service and VA employees for the care they provide to Veterans.

“Today is a very special day for the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center as we commemorate 90 years of service to our Nation’s Veterans and reaffirm our commitment to them in the decades to come,” said Lewis-Payton. “I especially want to thank James Floyd for his outstanding work at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center and to all the employees who provide such wonderful care to our Nation’s Veterans.”

Those in attendance received a commemorative 90th Anniversary coin which was made possible from donations from the James F. Smith Memorial American Legion Auxiliary Post 15, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Federally Employed Women Green Country Chapter, Haven House, United Daughters of the Confederacy and VA Voluntary Service.

The Veterans Canteen Service also provided refreshments for those in attendance. ★



# World War II Veterans Honor VA Employees

Story and Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

During World War II, Army Veteran Paul Andert just about saw it all. He took part in the Allied invasions of North Africa and Italy, landed on Omaha Beach during the D-Day Invasion of France and later fought in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge.

For his combat service, Andert earned numerous medals including the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.

In 2000, Andert enrolled for VA health care and receives his primary care through the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa. He is also a big advocate for VA.

**"We're very appreciative of what these folks do."**

As a member of the "World War II Vets of Tulsa," a Veterans Service Organization which was founded in 1977, Andert encourages other World War II

Veterans in the organization to enroll for VA health care.

"Most of the World War II guys I know never applied for anything while they were working, because they felt like they didn't need the government," said Andert, who is 91 and lives in Tulsa. "They were out to do it on their own. So then when they become retired, they thought 'hey I need to find out what I'm entitled to.' They finally woke up and I tell them they woke up too late, because some of them could have done something a long time ago."

Andert often drives Veterans to the Tulsa Clinic to help them enroll and also serves as a liaison between Veterans and VA staff. Andert said he counts on two VA employees the most when he or another Veteran needs assistance – Patient Advocate Joe Marengo and Registered Nurse Christi Williams.

"When I bring a guy, I bring him to Joe," said Andert, who has sought out Marengo's assistance for more than seven years. "I've been coming here for quite some time and we have on occasion needed help for various World

War II guys in our group and most always we've went to Joe first to find out what's the best approach."

Andert receives his care from the Tulsa Green Team and has personally received care from Williams for more than five years. Andert said he also counts on Williams when other Veterans have a medical question.

"She's worked with us on all kinds of medical situations as they came up," said Andert. "She has done a lot and is someone we can rely on."

To show his gratitude to Marengo and Williams, Andert presented them with







*World War II Veteran Paul Andert presents awards to VA employees Joe Marengo (right) and Christi Williams (left) on April 25 at the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa.*

an engraved plaque and an engraved American Eagle on April 25 on behalf of the World War II Vets of Tulsa.

“We’re very appreciative of what these folks do,” said Andert. “Everybody needs somebody who cares and you can count on. That’s what you need.”

Marengo said it was humbling to be recognized by an American hero such as Andert.

“I can’t put it in words,” said Marengo. “I love all our Veterans and what they do for us, but to get something like this

from Paul means a lot to me.”

Marengo also thanked Andert for being an advocate for VA when he speaks to local high schools and organizations.

“I’m so grateful for Paul and their group for the way they speak up for us,” said Marengo. “He comes to our defense and no one asked him to.”


Williams said she enjoys providing care to all Veterans, but holds a special place in her heart for World War II Veterans such as Andert.

“Paul makes my job easy,” said Williams. “He comes in and is always pleasant. I enjoy talking to him. He’s always respectful and patient and always has a smile on his face.”

Williams said the award from Andert was an honor.

“It really means a lot to me,” said Williams. “Somehow God knows when you need that little lift and it came at a good time from one of best Veterans I’ve ever known.” ★



A photograph showing two men, James Colvin and Jeff Hudgens, riding red therapeutic tricycles on a paved path. They are both wearing helmets and smiling. In the background, there is a large, multi-story brick building, which is the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center. The sky is overcast.

*Vietnam Veteran James Colvin (left) and Iraq War Veteran Jeff Hudgens ride their new AmTryke therapeutic tricycles on May 31 outside the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.*

# Non-Profit Donates Therapeutic Tricycles to Veterans, Hospital

Story and Photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

On May 31, National AMBUCS, Inc. donated three AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to Veterans who are undergoing outpatient rehabilitation treatment at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) and Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa. The organization also donated an additional three therapeutic tricycles to the JCMVAMC Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service, which will be used by our Veterans as a form of recreation and physical therapy.

AMBUCS is a non-profit organization with approximately 140 volunteer chapters in 30 states. Their mission is to create mobility and independence for people with disabilities.

Kent Clingenpeel, President of AMBUCS, Inc., said four chapters in Oklahoma and Kansas teamed up to raise the money for the tricycles.

“Our passion is to help disabled Veterans get out and enjoy life again,” said Clingenpeel.

Among the three Veterans who received a therapeutic tricycle was Marine Corps Veteran Jeff Hudgens, who was injured by an improvised explosive device in 2004 while riding in a Humvee in Iraq.

Hudgens suffered a traumatic brain injury as a result from the blast and has undergone outpatient rehabilitation treatment at JCMVAMC since 2005.

Meghan Collins, a JCMVAMC Phys-

ical Therapy Assistant, said the tricycle will help Hudgens and other Veterans become more active outdoors instead of leading a sedentary lifestyle.

“They haven’t been able to ride normal bikes, but now they can ride these adaptive bikes and go outside and ride with their families or grandchildren,” said Collins. “It’s just going to help their personal lives as well as their physical health.”

**“Our passion is to help disabled Veterans get out and enjoy life again.”**



Hudgens said he was thrilled to receive one of the tricycles and hoped it would help him lose weight.

“I need to start shedding some weight, so this is going to help a lot,” said Hudgens, who is currently a student at Northeastern State University (NSU) in Tahlequah. “I’m really excited to get back out and do something with my friends, because they’ve all got bikes and I’m always sitting at the house. So this will be excellent for me to get back out and do something.”

Collins said she hopes Hudgens will ride the tricycle to his classes at NSU.

“He’s made huge strides, but riding a bicycle is something I don’t think he ever thought was possible until AMBUCS came in and he saw the adaptive tricycles,” said Collins.

“Our goal is for him to ride it back and forth from his college classes and be out riding with his friends.”

Hudgens said he is grateful to AMBUCS for the gift.

“I don’t know if I can put it into words,” he said. “It’s phenomenal. I appreciate whoever had a hand in helping with this. This is going to help me out a lot.”

Earlier this year, AMBUCS also donated two AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to JCMVAMC Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service. With staff supervision, Veterans will have the opportunity to ride one of the tricycles outside instead of using a stationary bicycle indoors.

“The Veterans ride the bikes inside the gym, but outdoors is better,” said Collins. “Everybody likes to go outside.” ★



*Kent Clingenpeel, (second from left) National President of AMBUCS, Inc., presented AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to Vietnam Veteran James Colvin (left) and Iraq War Veteran Jeff Hudgens on May 31 at the medical center.*



# Baby Shower Honors Women Veterans, Provides Information about Maternity Benefits

Story and Photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

**O**n June 28, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) held a Baby Shower at the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient-Clinic in Tulsa for Women Veterans who are expectant mothers or who have recently delivered.

Women Veterans who attended got the opportunity to learn about VA benefits and services specifically for women, including maternity benefits. They also received gift bags and other items such as diaper bags, baby outfits, blankets, bibs, toys, lotion and shampoo.

"We want to let women Veterans know that, even though we are not seeing them at the VA for their prenatal appointments, we do still care about them and their babies," said Susan Hartsell, JCMVAMC Women Veterans Program Manager.

"We also provided them with information about Public Law 111-163, which authorizes the VA to furnish health care services of the newborn's routine medical care for seven days."

The gift bags and items were donated by the Oklahoma Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Green Country District Chapters.

Jane Smith, a member of DAR, said the group appreciates the service of women Veterans and wants to help them anyway they can.

"We just really like to help Veterans, so we thought it would be great to help these women who have served our country and do something for them," said Smith. "We just think their service to our country is amazing. So if there is any way we can help these women with having their babies, it's somehow to repay them for what all they've done for our country."

**"We want to let women Veterans know that, even though we are not seeing them at the VA for their prenatal appointments, we do still care about them and their babies."**

Iraq War Veteran Jennifer Bibbs, who is expecting a baby boy on Thanksgiving Day, said she was surprised when she received an invitation for Baby Shower in the mail and thought it would be an interesting event to attend.

"I didn't realize they did stuff like this," said Bibbs, who served in Iraq during 2003-2004 with the 4th Infantry Division, 125th Signal Brigade. "I thought it was pretty neat and thought I might as well take advantage of it and participate since they went to all the work to do it."

Navy Veteran Julie Kleinknight, who is expecting a baby boy on July 23, was also surprised when she received her invitation in the mail and decided to drive an hour and a half from her home in Afton, Okla. to attend.

"It's amazing that they did this for us," said Kleinknight. "I



felt like if they're going to do it, then I should support it. I just thought it was awesome."

Kleinknight left the Navy in 2000 after serving for eight years with the Seabees, but didn't enroll for VA health care until 2012. She said she was pleasantly surprised with all the services that VA provides, especially those specifically for women.

"I've found that there are many services out there that I didn't know about over the last 12 years," she said. "I think it's amazing what they're doing for women and women's health with the VA."

If you're a Woman Veteran and want to learn more about VA health care, please contact Susan Hartsell at 918-577-4277. ★

**"We just really like to help Veterans, so we thought it would be great to help these women who have served our country and do something for them."**



Marine Corps Veteran Crystal Berry (right) and her husband Phillip pose for a photo with the gift bag they received during the Baby Shower.

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Contact Your Local **VA Caregiver Support Coordinator** to register for a **Building Better Caregivers** workshop.

Suzanne Koenig, LCSW @ 918-577-3421

OR

Michael Woods, RN @ 918-577-0496

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# JCMVAMC Opens New Outpatient Detoxification Clinic

By JCMVAMC Public Affairs

Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

The medical center held a ribbon cutting for a new Outpatient Detoxification Clinic on June 25, which is located on the 4th floor of the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center in Behavioral Medicine Service.

The new program will assist Veterans who are going through substance use withdrawal. Based on the severity of withdrawal, care is provided either in the inpatient or outpatient setting.

The outpatient program compliments the services the facility is currently providing on the inpatient medical and psychiatry units.

Veterans who are having mild to moderate withdrawal symptoms and have a stable recovery home environment are ideal candidates for the program. A fulltime psychiatrist and a registered nurse will work with patients and caregivers.



*JCMVAMC leadership and staff hold a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 25 for the new Outpatient Detoxification Clinic.*

Patients will be observed for a few hours in daytime over a span of seven to 14 days. Veterans will return home each day. Referrals will come from primary care and other mental health providers. ★

## Improving Energy Efficiency, Preserving the Environment

By JCMVAMC Public Affairs

Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist



*Solar panels in Parking Lots 1 & 2.*

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center is doing its part to encourage conservation of our environment and security for our energy future.

In May, a project to install more than 1,500 solar panels in parking lots 1, 2, and 14 and over the atrium area inside the hospital was completed.

The solar panels are expected to generate about 625,000 kwh of electricity per year and reduce the hospital's electric utility expenditure by five percent.

A second positive result of the project is new covered parking, which will reduce the temperature in vehicles during the summer.

The solar project is only one of the hospital's on-going efforts to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy costs and preserve the environment. Other on-going initiatives

include replacing our 30-year old steam boilers with new, more energy efficient units, installing energy-efficient LED parking lot lighting and incorporating sustainable design practices and environmental management programs.

Examples of how our sustainable design practices are being implemented include use of recycled paper products, bio-based cleaning products and recycled materials in construction where those items can be used. Our Green Environmental Management, or GEMS, program includes efforts to recycle paper, plastics, and metals and oversee the proper disposal of chemicals, batteries and other controlled items. Overall, the facility has reduced its energy costs by over \$500,000 since 2009.

Besides the on-going efforts, our facility also has future plans to improve energy efficiency and reduce impact on the environment. In accordance with the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, our facility has also developed a long range plan to implement energy savings opportunities and reduce overall energy consumption by 30% compared to 2003 baseline usage. Future projects planned in the next few years include installing more efficient heating and cooling systems throughout the building, installing energy-efficient windows and replacing interior lighting with more efficient lighting systems. There are also future plans to add more solar panels to meet 15% of the facility's electrical usage. ★

# Lifestyle Changes Can Lower Risk for Diabetes

By Pam Benson, APRN, CNP, MS, Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager

**H**ave you been diagnosed with diabetes? Has your doctor warned you that you are at risk? Hearing this can be scary especially when your health is at risk.

Diabetes is on the rise, but in most cases it is preventable with healthy lifestyle changes. Some can even be reversed.

The first step to prevent and control diabetes does not mean you have to live in deprivation. While eating right is important, you don't have to give up sweets entirely or resign yourself to a lifetime of bland health foods. You can still enjoy your favorite foods and take pleasure from your meals without feeling hungry or deprived.

Whether you are trying to prevent or control diabetes, there is some good news - you can make a big difference with healthy lifestyle changes. The most important thing you can do for your health is to lose weight and the good thing is you do not have to lose all your extra pounds to see benefits.

A weight loss of five to 10 percent of your total weight can help lower your blood sugar considerably, as well as lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

While the biggest risk factor for developing diabetes is being overweight, not all body fat is created

equal. You're at a higher risk if you carry your weight around your abdomen as opposed to your hips and thighs.

Many studies have shown that your waist size is a better predictor of diabetes risk than your body mass index. For a woman, it is a waist circumference of 35 inches or more. For a man, it is a waist circumference of 40 inches or more.

Foods that add weight around your waist are fructose which is found in sugary beverages such as soda, energy and sports drinks, coffee drinks, doughnuts, muffins, cereal, candy and granola bars. Cutting back on these foods will help you gain a slimmer

waistline as well as a lower your risk of diabetes.

Exercise is also important, but what you eat has the biggest impact when it comes to weight loss. What may surprise you is that your nutritional needs are virtually the same as everyone else. No special foods or complicated diets are necessary.

A diabetic diet is simply a healthy eating plan that is high in nutrients, low in fat and moderate in calories. It is a healthy diet for anyone! The only difference is that you need to pay more attention in some of your food choices—most notably the carbohydrates you eat.

Carbohydrates have a big impact on your blood sugar levels more so than fats and proteins, but you do not have to avoid them. Just be smart about what types of carbs you eat. It is best to limit highly refined carbs like white bread, pasta, rice, as well as soda, candy and snack foods.

Also focus on high-fiber complex carbohydrates, also known as slow-release carbs. Slow-release carbs help keep blood sugar levels even because they are digested more slowly, which prevents your body from producing too much insulin. They also provide lasting energy and help you stay fuller. ★

**A weight loss of 5 to 10% of your total weight can help lower your blood sugar considerably, as well as lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.**





Here are some carbs that are packed with fiber and don't spike your blood sugar:

Instead of	Try these high-fiber options
White rice	Brown rice or wild rice
White potatoes—including fries and mashed	Sweet potatoes, yams, winter squash, cauliflower mash
Regular pasta	Whole wheat pasta
White bread	Whole wheat or whole grain bread
Sugary breakfast cereal	High fiber breakfast cereal (raisin bran, etc.)
Instant oatmeal	Steel cut oats or rolled oats
Croissant or pasty	Bran muffin

**Remember, the key to taking control of your diabetes is you. You have more control over your health than you think. If you have any questions, please talk to your Primary Care Team.**



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# Healthy Living Calendar

## Cooking Education Program

This program provides hands-on experience and help Veterans become more independent and responsible for their nutritional care.



### Muskogee

Wednesday's in the Muskogee hospital auditorium, excluding federal holidays, at 9 a.m.

## MOVE! Introduction Class

MOVE! is VA's national weight management program designed to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health.

### Muskogee

Monday's, excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m. in the Patient Education Room

### Tulsa

Monday's (except the 4th Monday), excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m. in the Sooner Room

## MOVE! Group Class



Learn how to improve your eating, exercise and behavior habits.

### Muskogee

Wednesday's, excluding federal holidays, from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. and 3 - 4 pm in the auditorium.

### Tulsa

Tuesday's, excluding federal holidays, at 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room

## MOVE! Support Group

Receive support from other Veterans who have participated in the MOVE! Program.

### Tulsa

Fourth Thursday of the month at 2 p.m. in the Sooner Room.

## Diabetic/Pre-Diabetic Group Education

Learn survival skills for living with diabetes and improving eating habits to reduce risks.

### Tulsa

Monday's, excluding federal holidays, at 10 a.m. in the Sooner Room



## Lipid Education

Learn how to improve your heart health through lifestyle changes.

### Tulsa

First and Third Thursday, excluding federal holidays, at 2 p.m. in the Sooner Room.



## Nutrition and Wellness

Learn the basics of nutrition.

### Muskogee

To register for Muskogee classes, contact Gregory Thomas, RD, at 918-577-3287. To register for Tulsa classes, contact Melinda Smiley, RD/LD, 918-628-2509.

### Tulsa

Fourth Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the Sooner Room

## Veterans Open Art Studio/Writing Workshop

The Open Art Studio and Writing Workshop gives Veterans an opportunity to create art or write and socialize with other Veterans.

### Muskogee

Monday's, excluding federal holidays, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Contact Deborah Moreno at 918-577-4014 for more information.



The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center and Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinics served approximately 37,000 Veterans from a 25-county area in Eastern Oklahoma in 2012.



**Jack. C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (Muskogee)**  
918-577-3000 or toll free at 1-888-397-8387



**Jack C. Montgomery East (Muskogee)**  
918-577-3699



**Behavioral Medicine Service Clinic (Tulsa)**  
918-610-2000



**Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic (Tulsa)**  
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